

PROJECT from page 3

schedule, as well as cover traffic impacts, alternative routes and allow residents to ask questions.

Martin informed the town's Community Planning and Physical Services committee Aug. 29 that information is being shared with stakeholders in the project, including the Park Road Business Association, and neighboring residents to keep them informed of the plan.

The project, which involves the relocation of the I-84 off-ramp so it is adjacent to the existing on-ramp as well as other changes meant to improve intersection capacity, efficiency and safety, was designed by the town's engineering division.

That allowance on the part of the state was unique and an important one to note, Martin said.

"It definitely was impressive, as far as I'm concerned, that the state would allow us to do that; that they acknowledged we have the experience on our staff to do a design of this volume and depth," he said.

The project took more than 5,700 hours of design work, the cost of which was reimbursed by the state.

The ramp relocation is meant to improve traffic flow and alleviate congestion by increasing storage capacity between Trout Brook Drive and the ramps.

The off-ramp will be re-graded and widened to provide an additional left turn lane, which will increase capacity and improve the off-ramp safety. The crest curve that currently causes drivers to lose sightlines while approaching the intersection will be eliminated.

One traffic signal will control both the on-and off-ramps, where currently no light controls the on-ramp. Park Road will also be wid-

ened on the south side to create an additional travel lane and left turn lanes. Pedestrian and bicyclist enhancements will be incorporated into the project.

Civil Engineer Greg Sommer has said that a significant queue length reduction will lead to a reduction in vehicle accidents, the most common of which are rear-end and sideswipe collisions. He said changes in driver behavior would be an "indirect benefit" of the project.

Because the delay at the lights will be reduced, "People may take less risks and drive a little more appropriately through this area," he said.

Currently, the town owns and controls the traffic signal at Raymond Road and the state owns the signals at the exit ramp and at Trout Brook Drive. After the project, the town will take ownership of all three signals.

The current construction estimate is \$6.8 million. The project will be, in part, federally funded through the surface transportation program, and, in part, state funded through the DOT so just a portion of the expense – an estimated \$975,000 – will come from town capital bonding.

The estimated project end is the spring of 2019, a timeframe in which Martin said the contractor is "very confident."

As of last week, Paramount Construction had come in with the low bid on the project and the town was waiting for state approval to award the contract.

On the Sept. 12 Town Council agenda, a resolution is expected to transfer funds from the town's street resurfacing line item to this project, Martin said. Although Paramount Construction was the low bidder, its bid was \$240,000 over the town's estimate for the project, which is why the transfer is needed.

"We'd like to have a shovel in the ground by the beginning of October," Martin said of the project.

Once work is underway, Martin said the message to residents will be to avoid the area to the best extent possible by utilizing Boulevard, Trout Brook Drive and other major roads near the center of town. Signage will be posted on I-84 alerting motorists to take alternative routes.

"It will help alleviate motorist frustration but also help construction move along as well," Martin said.

The majority of construction will take place during the day, Monday through Friday, and Martin said there will be few instances when the ramps will close. Park Road will remain open throughout the project.

A webcam will be installed to provide still images that will be updated to a website for the project so drivers can check on the progress or observe congestion in the area throughout the day. A timelapse video is also planned to show the progression of the project.

As he turned through nearly 200 pages of plans on a recent Friday afternoon, Sommer reflected on the expansiveness of the process to develop the project. Each element in the area, from signage, to drainage, to guiderails, plantings, pavement markings and thousands of feet of cable for the traffic signals needed to be measured and marked in the overall planning.

Although the town brought in surveyors for that work, the project development was all done by Sommer and fellow Civil Engineer Julie Viera.

"We proposed significant improvements to the Park Road interchange and as a daily user of the interchange, I can't wait to try it out," Viera said of the project.

At a public meeting on

the project held in 2015, residents expressed concerns with the space between the current on- and off-ramps where trees will be removed to allow for the ramp relocation.

Berming will be done there, along with swales, to flow water off the ramps and into Trout Brook.

Susan Fiedler of the Connecticut Department of Transportation said at the time that a landscape plan will restore and enhance resources, develop a multi-modal streetscape, reimagine the gateway design and cue drivers for speed and way-finding.

"We're confident we can restore the character and ecology of the neighborhood," she said.

The welcome to West Hartford monument sign will be relocated across from

the ramp entrance and exit, and new elements to encourage a pedestrian-friendly feeling will be added, all of which will be maintained by the town after the project is complete.

In the space currently between the ramps where trees will be removed, reforestation will be done using a variety of hardwood trees, white pines, native grasses and shrubbery that will grow up naturally and provide a bird habitat.

While Sommer said he knows it may be shocking for some to see the trees come down at the outset of the project, he stressed that residents remember the area will be replanted.

"I'm excited to see this come together. I recognize it will be a pretty significant undertaking, but the end goal will be a much, much

By the Numbers

Provided by the Town of West Hartford engineering department

Average vehicles per day
30,000

Cubic yards of earth to be moved 17,300

New sidewalk (in square feet) 7,500

Calendar days to complete 400

New trees to be planted 280

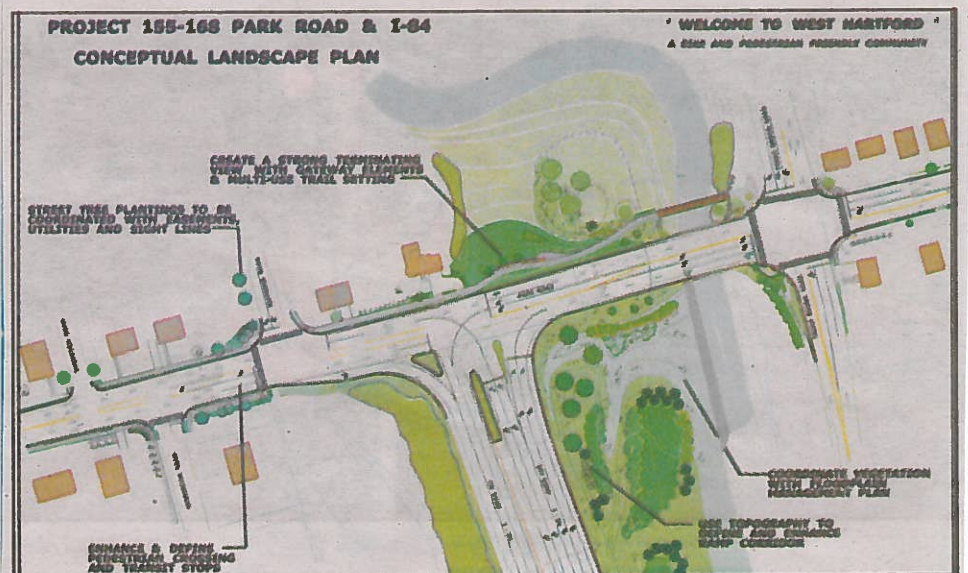
Alternate exits during construction 41, 42, 44

New traffic signals 3

better intersection and I think the community will be pleased with it," he said.

For updates about the project while work is ongoing, visit westhartfordct.gov/ParkRd or email parkrd-I84@westhartfordct.gov.

The West Hartford Press

Community News

Courtesy image.

Pictured is the landscape plan for the project, which also shows the changes to the ramps.

Park Road/I-84 project set to begin

Public information meeting planned for Sept. 18

By Abigail Albair
Editor

Work is set to begin soon on the Park Road at Interstate 84 interchange

improvement project.

A public information session will be held Sept. 18 regarding the work slated for the "gateway to West Hartford," as town engineer

Duane Martin called it.

The meeting will provide an overview of the plans and the construction

See **PROJECT** on page 7

TurleyCT Community Publications

Life Publications The Valley Press The West Hartford Press
To advertise call 860-651-4700 • TurleyCT.com

with your lawn care company? Local, Family Owned Since 1983 34 years setting industry standards Veterans & Senior Discounts